

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 068375
ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:TH
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T STATE 068375

EXDIS - FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PLO, SA

SUBJECT: ARAFAT AND FAHD

REF: JIDDA 1758

1. WE ALL ENJOYED AND PROFITED FROM YOUR THOUGHTFUL
TELEGRAM ABOUT THE SAUDI RELATIONSHIP WITH ARAFAT AND
SAUDI VIEWS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK. WITH
SAUDI WILLINGNESS AND CAPABILITY TO MAKE ITS WEIGHT FELT
IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE MIDDLE EAST GROWING, AND WITH FAHD
INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO COMBINE THE TRUE AND THE TITULAR
POWER, WE SHOULD KNOW ALL WE CAN ABOUT THE DIRECTIONS IN
WHICH THE SAUDIS WILL BE ENDEAVORING TO DIRECT AFFAIRS
IN THE AREA.

2. I WOULD LIKE TO CARRY SOME OF THE THREADS OF YOUR
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THINKING A LITTLE FARTHER WITH YOU. FAHD'S POLICY AS
YOU DESCRIBED IT LOOKED BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE PERIOD TO
A SITUATION IN WHICH A SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED
AND AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ESTABLISHED. IN SUCH
A SITUATION, HIS CONCERN WOULD BE TO STEER THE PALESTIN-
IAN STATE IN DIRECTIONS LEAST THREATENING TO THE SAUDIS
AND TO DENY IT TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOVIETS.

3. FAHD MUST BE WELL AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT THE MOST IMMEDIATE AND SERIOUS THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF THE AREA IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THERE WILL BE NO SETTLEMENT AT ALL. THE MOST EVIDENT OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPANSION OF SOVIET INFLUENCE, NOT ONLY AMONG THE PALESTINIANS BUT EVEN IN THE STATES THAT HAVE ATTEMPTED TO TURN AWAY FROM MOSCOW, LIES IN THE PROLONGED ABSENCE OF PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AND IN THE END A FAILURE TO REACH A SETTLEMENT. THE PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE AT THIS POINT TO COMMENCEMENT OF NEGOTIATIONS, IF NOT TO ACHIEVEMENT OF AN EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT, IS THE PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION IN NEGOTIATIONS. GIVEN ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FULLY INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE AND THEIR UNWILLINGNESS FOR OTHER REASONS AS WELL TO ACCEPT THE PLO AS A NEGOTIATING PARTNER, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE NEGOTIATIONS EVER GETTING UNDERWAY IF THE ARAB SIDE INSISTS ON THE PLO BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE AS PLO AT GENEVA, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE REAFFIRMATION AT THE RECENT CAIRO PNC MEETING OF POSITIONS BASED ON REJECTION OF SC RESOLUTION 242 AND REFUSAL TO MAKE PEACE WITH ISRAEL--POSITIONS WHICH INCIDENTALLY ARE TOTALLY OUT OF STEP WITH THOSE OF THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES.

4. DO YOU THINK FAHD UNDERSTANDS THE SITUATION IN THIS WAY? TO THE EXTENT HE COULD BE PERSUADED OF THE REALITY OF THIS PROBLEM, WOULD HE BE PREPARED TO USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH ARAFAT IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A WAY FOR PALESTINIAN INTERESTS TO BE REPRESENTED AT LEAST

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INITIALLY IN A NEGOTIATION BY SOMETHING OTHER THAN AN INVITATION TO THE PLO? SAUDI ASSURANCES THAT PALESTINIAN INTERESTS WOULD BE PROTECTED IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT CONCEIVABLY HAVE SOME IMPORTANCE FOR ARAFAT. OR WOULD HE BE PREPARED TO USE HIS INFLUENCE TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN PLO POSITIONS THAT WOULD GIVE US SOMETHING TO WORK WITH IN SEEKING TO OVERCOME THIS OBSTACLE ON THE ROAD TO GENEVA? ARE ARAB GOVERNMENTS REALLY PREPARED TO PERMIT PLO TO CONTINUE TO BLOCK RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS?

5. IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT IS THE MEANING (AND IN A CRUDER SENSE, THE UTILITY TO THE U.S.) OF THE FAHD-ARAFAT RELATIONSHIP FOR THE IMMEDIATE SITUATION WE FIND OURSELVES IN AND FOR THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS THAT WE ARE FACED WITH? YOUR IDENTIFICATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP, AND YOUR ASSESSMENT OF FAHD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD A PALESTINIAN STATE, ADDED VALUABLE INSIGHTS TO OUR APPRECIATION OF AFFAIRS IN THE AREA. I HOPE THAT YOU CAN SIMILARLY INTERPRET FAHD'S THINKING OVER A SHORTER RANGE, PARTICULARLY

LARLY SINCE THIS ISSUE WILL VERY LIKELY PLAY A MAJOR ROLE
IN THE TALKS THAT WE WILL WANT TO HAVE WITH THE PRINCE

DURING HIS VISIT HERE.

6. RE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT U.S. CONTACTS, DIRECT OR
INDIRECT, WITH ARAFAT, THE SITUATION IS NOT REALLY
ANALOGOUS TO OUR DEALINGS WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE, NORTH
KOREANS, ETC., WHERE WE WERE PARTIES TO CONFLICTS WE WERE
TRYING TO RESOLVE. IN A SITUATION WHERE WE ARE MIDDLE-
MAN, WE OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND THE POTENTIAL
IMPACT OF ANY STEPS WE MIGHT TAKE IN THIS DIRECTION ON
OUR ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO PLAY EFFECTIVE MIDDLEMAN ROLE,
IN TERMS OF REACTIONS OF BOTH SIDES AND OF DOMESTIC
SUPPORT FOR OUR PEACEMAKING EFFORTS.
CHRISTOPHER

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